

DARPA-BAA-14-49

Frequently Asked Questions

Last Updated: 11/25/2014

REMINDER

Full Program Proposal Due Date: Tuesday, December 2, 2014

Advanced Study Proposal Due Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2015

GENERAL INFORMATION

Q: If my research is relevant in this field, but is not geared specifically to meet these goals, is there a solicitation that I can respond to?

A: Yes. DARPA/BTO has an Open solicitation (DARPA-BAA-14-38) for which responses are being collected through 30 Apr 2015.

PROPOSALS

Q: Can a PI submit an idea both as an Advanced Study and as part of a Full Proposal?

A: Yes, but the Government will not fund the same effort twice. Proposers to either track are encouraged to submit abstracts. Feedback from the abstract phase may help proposers decide the appropriate strategy.

Q: How will proposals be reviewed? Peer review?

A: Proposals will be reviewed by government officials and are not subject to peer review. The government may solicit input from subject matter experts who have been contracted by the government to perform this service.

Q: If one wishes to propose to more than one Advanced Study area, does one need to submit multiple proposals?

A: No. However, it is recommended that the cost proposals for each Advanced Study area be kept separate from one another to simplify the contracting process.

Q: Can we submit the proposal on if we did not submit an abstract?

A: As stated in the BAA: "Regardless of DARPA's response to an abstract, proposers may submit a proposal. DARPA will review all proposals submitted using the published evaluation criteria and without regard to any comments resulting from the review of an abstract."

Q: On the SOW template, the font size is 10pt, but the application requires all sections within Volume I be submitted using 12pt font. Should the font size of the SOW template be changed to 12pt font?

A: Change the font size of the SOW (when it is embedded within Volume 1) to 12 point.

Q: Instructions require proposers to download the SOW template in Attachment 4. Is this template submitted in addition to Volume I and Volume II of the proposal and only a summary SOW included in section F of Volume I?

A: Both – the template should be included within Volume 1, and also submitted as a separate MS Word document.

Q: Are proposers required to use all 3 PowerPoint summary slides?

A: As stated in the slide guidance - "Maximum of three slides." No more than 3 can be submitted, but all 3 are not required.

Q: Do slides count towards the page limit?

A: Yes.

COST/FUNDING

Q: Are grants part of the funding mechanism for either the Full Program or the Advanced Studies?

A: No, only procurement contracts or other transactions.

Q: Can you provide budget guidance?

A: For Advanced Study proposals, it is expected that total costs/year should be in the range of \$250-500K. Approximately \$30M total is budgeted for the Full Program track in this BAA and it is expected that 3-5 awards will be made. Budgets must be clearly justified and commensurate with the effort and deliverables proposed.

Q: Is there anywhere else that might have more specific instructions for the budget template, other than what is in the BAA?

A: You can access instructional videos via the following links:

Introduction: <http://youtu.be/HvDweDV52Xo>

Example Budget: <http://youtu.be/Np-OHcLnfdA>

Editing and Customizing the Blank Budget Template: <http://youtu.be/Obr7H8bYIG4>

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Q: How many awards are anticipated?

A: We anticipate 3-5 full program awards and ~6 advanced study awards, but these numbers will depend on funding levels and the quality of the proposals.

Q: The Full Program requires that proposers address all 3 Technical Areas. Must the effort be divided in 3 equal parts?

A: There is no requirement for the effort to be divided in 3 equal parts. The BAA specifies specific milestones that need to be achieved in the 3 Technical Areas. It is up to the Proposer to determine how their efforts should be allocated to meet the milestones.

Q: Can this program support industry/academic partnerships?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you prefer multi-disciplinary teams to be from one research group, multiple groups at one institution, or multiple institutions?

A: There is no preference. Please note that the BAA requires all proposers to the Full Program or Advanced Study tracks to submit a Management Approach.

Q: The Proposers Day Slides shows April 2015 as Contract Executed & Kick-off. Is April 1, 2015 the expected start date for the project or is the start date flexible?

A: Both – 4/1/15 is the expected start date, but that is largely contingent upon contract negotiations and the timeliness of the award process.

TECHNICAL

Q: What is meant by an ‘undomesticated’ microorganism?

A: Organisms that are commonly used as laboratory models (e.g., E. coli K12, B. subtilis, and S. cerevisiae) are considered domesticated. Undomesticated refers to organisms that have not been extensively passaged through a laboratory, for example, a recent isolate from an environmental sample.

Q: While all work needs to be done in a completely controlled laboratory environment, can “starting materials” come from environmental samples, such as soil?

A: Yes.

Q: How do you define a microbial community? Multicellular organisms? Prokaryotes only? Single cell eukaryotes? Slime mold?

A: For the purposes of this BAA, a microbial community may be comprised of prokaryotes, eukaryotes, archaea, or mixtures thereof. In instances when a multi-species community is requested, the organisms should be from different species as defined by standard phylogenetic methods. A multicellular organism with differentiated cells may be included, but is considered only a single species.

Q: Does a consortium have to be multiple species? Can it be variants in one species?

A: DARPA is interested in pushing the boundaries of engineering microbial consortia. Approaches that use only a single species or closely related strains are not encouraged.

Q: Are there specific species that performers should use?

A: No. However, proposers must consider the other requirements of the BAA, including those related to safety and scalability.

Q: For issues related to the mutation rate, would it be acceptable to work on reducing the frequency of mutated cells in the population (rather than rate of mutations arising de novo)?

A: Approaches in which mutants do occur, but are rapidly eliminated from the population will be considered.

Q: Can experiments be done in an animal facility?

A: Yes. However proposers must comply with all institutional, state, and federal requirements regarding animal use

Q: Are living-nonliving hybrid approaches acceptable? (e.g., material approaches)

A: Yes, but these approaches must be consistent with other requirements of the BAA, such as scalability.

Q: May non-engineered organisms be used?

A: Yes.